

Fox Theatre  
20 Flatbush Avenue  
Brooklyn  
Kings County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5554

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NY,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5554

## FOX THEATRE

Location: 20 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. The office building entrance was at 1 Nevins Street.

USGS Brooklyn Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.586400.4504070

Present Owner: None. Building was demolished in 1970-1971. Last owner was the Barton Candy Company.

Present Use: The theatre was last used as an opera house for a season before standing vacant. Demolition was begun on November 7, 1970 and completed early in 1971.

Statement of Significance: The Fox Theatre in Brooklyn represented the moving picture theatre in its prodigious phase. With a 4,305 seating capacity, the theatre was one of the largest ever built. Stylistically, it exemplified creative eclecticism, combining East Indian, Baroque, and Art Deco elements into an imaginative and novel blend. A principal showplace of metropolitan New York City, it was initially a major link in the chain of theatres forged by motion picture mogul William Fox.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The cornerstone was laid on September 30, 1927. The theatre opened on August 31, 1928.
2. Original and subsequent owners:
  - a. 1928-1934. William Fox Theatre Corporation, owner and operator.
  - b. 1934. Leased to Fabian Enterprises by the Brooklyn Fox Corporation, Continental Bank & Trust Co., Trustee in Possession.
  - c. 1962. Brooklyn Fox Corporation sold the theatre to an unknown buyer, probably the Barton Candy Co. Fabian Enterprises continued its lease until 1966.

- d. 1970. The site and building were bought by the Borough of Brooklyn in September. Demolition began the following November.
3. Architect: C. Howard Crane & Associates, Detroit, Michigan, with Kenneth Franzheim in charge of the New York office and Ben A. Dore, Chief Designer, in the Detroit office.

Charles Howard Crane was born in Hartford, Connecticut on August 13, 1885 and began his career in that city as a draftsman in 1904. He moved to Detroit in 1905 and worked in the offices of Albert Kahn and Smith, Hinchman & Grylls prior to establishing his own practice in 1909. By the completion of the Majestic Theatre in 1917 and Orchestra Hall (HABS No. MICH-271) in 1919, both in Detroit, Crane's long and successful specialized career as a theatre architect was well launched. The Crane firm designed some 325 theatres in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Among Crane's 50 theatres in Detroit, where he practiced personally for 23 years, was the Fox, which, with its twin, his Fox in St. Louis, was one of the two largest theatres in the country when it opened in 1928. The style used was a blend of East Indian, Byzantine, and Baroque. Crane partially explained that mélange in an interview published by the Detroit Times on March 25, 1928:

Work done by archeologists in artistic research during the last century has been both daring and fertile. . . . Delicately spiritual, and at the same time sensuous, the Hindu art gives ideal inspiration for theatre architecture.

Unlike most theatre architects of his time, Crane did not develop a personal style. His chief designer, the former Canadian government architect Ben A. Dore, and the staff, at one time numbering 53 draftsmen, were allowed to be completely eclectic, working with equal facility in many styles and combining them freely.

At the onset of the Great Depression Crane moved to England, where his London office continued to specialize in theatres. His successful solution of perhaps his greatest engineering challenge produced the twelve-acre Earl's Court sports and amusement structure erected above a maze of railway tracks. The five exhibition halls were so designed that they could be opened into one vast amphitheatre seating 23,000, and the Olympic-sized swimming pool could be raised, frozen for skating, or used as a stage or playing field.

At the close of World War II, Crane resumed his annual visits to his Detroit office. He devoted his remaining energies to rebuilding or modernizing British industrial plants. He continued to reside in London, where he died on August 14, 1952 at the age of 67. One of the most prolific theatre architects of any age, he was noted both for the great size of his largest theatres and for the excellent acoustics in many of them.

4. Builders and suppliers: The contractor was the Aronberg-Fried Company, Inc. Fried is said to have been a relative of William Fox, whose surname was originally Fried.
5. Original plans: None were found. A small schematic unscaled plan drawn by Geoffrey Paterson and published in his "Farewell to Another Fox," Console, May 1971, shows the general layout. An undetailed rough partial plan and an undetailed composite longitudinal section, both lent by Louis Wiltse of Detroit, a former Crane associate, give some dimensions.
6. Alterations and additions: Only minor alterations were made. Shortly after opening night, the orchestra pit was reduced in depth from front to back, and the stage apron was extended six feet, creating a hazard for musicians on the rising platform. The organ main console was moved at that time from a central lift to one at the left side of the orchestra pit. In 1934 William Fox's eighth-floor apartment became Radio Station WBNY.

B. Historic Persons and Events Associated with the Structure:

William Fox was born in Hungary in 1879 or 1880 of German-Jewish parents named Fried and was brought by them to the United States when he was nine months old. After an impoverished childhood in New York City, during which an accident rendered his left arm useless, Fox began his flamboyant success in the entertainment business by renting nickelodeons. Although circumstances had so limited his education that he remained illiterate, his shrewd grasp of essentials more than compensated for that lack, at least until over-extension ultimately brought him to financial disaster.

In 1925, the Fox Theatre Corporation, then rated at \$20,000,000, embarked on a policy of building or acquiring ultra-large theatres. Five of the most notable, all built in 1928 and all named Fox, were in Brooklyn, Detroit, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Atlanta. Twenty-five theatres in the Fox

system were designed by C. Howard Crane, architect of the Brooklyn house. By 1929, Fox holdings had pyramided to 800 theatres, headed by the Roxy as flagship house, valued at \$200,000,000. Fox's vast theatres presented lavish stage productions in addition to Fox films. The Brooklyn Fox was part of the Fox Metropolitan Theatre Corporation, which controlled theatres with a total seating capacity of 140,000 in New York City.

In July 1929 Fox was injured so badly in an automobile accident that he was three months in the hospital. The Friday before the Stock Market crash he realized \$20,000,000 from the sale of assets that dropped to \$6,000,000 on the following Tuesday and continued to plummet thereafter. Eventually the Fox Film Corporation stock he retained slipped from \$119 to \$1.00 a share. By February 1933 the Fox Film Corporation went into receivership. After an almost impenetrable maze of manoeuvres involving bankers, financiers, lawyers, stockholders, and government officials, William Fox declared bankruptcy in 1936.

More litigation followed the bankruptcy. Fox was accused of anti-trust violations, income tax evasion, and even of selling short in a deliberate effort to loot his own companies. Whether or not he was guilty of anything more than a desperate effort to salvage at least a fragment of his empire was never determined in court. However, he was indicted for attempting to bribe a judge at his bankruptcy hearing, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to a year in prison and fined \$3,000. He was paroled in May 1943 after serving almost six months at Lewisburg. His attempt to withdraw his guilty plea was unavailing. He died in May 1952 neglected and ignored by the film industry he had once sought to dominate. In spite of his misfortunes and at least one tragic error in judgement, Fox retained sufficient assets to leave his wife and daughter a modest fortune. William Fox is best remembered for the sumptuous theatres he caused to be built and for superlative films his studios produced, among them such award-winners as What Price Glory?, Cavalcade, State Fair, and Berkeley Square.

In 1926 Fox interests acquired control of the triangular property bounded by Flatbush Avenue, Nevins Street, and Livingston Street in Brooklyn. In 1927 the site, partially occupied by the Cowperthwait Building, was cleared. The cornerstone of the Fox Theatre was laid on September 27, 1927 at the junction of Flatbush Avenue and Nevins Street in the presence of numerous civic dignitaries, prominent

members of the business community, and theatre representatives, Borough President James A. Byrne officiating. William Fox himself was not present, but what was said to be the first check he ever earned was enclosed in the stone along with the day's Brooklyn newspapers.

In April 1928 the forthcoming August opening was announced. The 4,305-seat theatre was reported to have cost \$10,000,000 and was described as the most recent addition to the Fox chain "which now embraces more than 280 theatres through the United States." A 70-piece house orchestra was assembled, with Charles Previn, former musical director of the Roxy Theatre as conductor. Previn had worked with the St. Louis Municipal Opera Company and had been involved with over 60 stage productions for A. L. Erlanger and others. The associate conductor, Frederick Fradkin, had served as the first American concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

As the popular entertainer Georgie Jessel explained so significantly from the stage of the new Fox Theater in the course of the inaugural ceremonies last night, "it was only a year ago that Cowperthwait was asking four or five dollars for an ordinary chair on the same spot. Now you can get a beautifully upholstered mezzanine seat for 75 cents."

Which is another way of saying that William Fox's newest "temple of amusement" at Flatbush ave. and Nevins st. is open for business. It is another way of explaining that Brooklyn may now point with pride to the second largest motion picture theatre in the city. The largest, of course, is still the Roxy, albeit the esteemed Mr. Samuel Rothafel "Roxy", who was among those present last evening, found reason to admit that the new Fox Theater was not far behind his own Cathedral in magnificence and structural splendor. (Brooklyn Eagle, September 1, 1928)

So began reporter Martin Dickstein's bylined account headlined "New Fox Has Sparkling Opening." The ceremonies commenced with the "Star-Spangled Banner" followed by a "Dedictory Tableau." Next, the packed audience heard and cheered Borough President Byrne's address of welcome on the Fox Movietone. Charles Previn then conducted the Fox Theatre Grand Orchestra in a "thunderous" rendition of Wagner's Tannhäuser Overture and a "galvanizing" symphonic jazz arrangement of a Johann Strauss waltz titled "Dance of the Blue Danube Blues." The orchestra was followed by screenings of Fox Movietone News and a Movietone short subject of George

Bernard Shaw wittily mimicking Benito Mussolini. The curtain then rose on "Carnival des Naples," the stage show, sub-titled "A Mood Picture of Neapolitan Shores." The 16 "Fox-Tillerettes" danced a tarantella, Niles Morgan and Vivian La Rue danced their adagio, and John Griffin, soloist, and the Fox Theatre Choral Ensemble of 40 voices sang Neapolitan airs. The gala program concluded with the feature film, Street Angel, a romance set in Naples and starring Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell.

For some years after its opening, the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn enjoyed a generally uneventful but successful career. One of the big four in the Fulton Street/Flatbush Avenue theatre district, it offered stage and screen presentations that paralleled those at Loew's Metropolitan, RKO's Albee Theatre, and the Brooklyn Paramount. Attendance was so great on November 4, 1930 that police were called to protect shop windows from the pressure of the holiday crowd. In 1932, fortune changed as one Henry Spitz of Paterson, New Jersey filed suit, claiming default by Fox on his \$13,000,000 bond issue and seeking appointment of an equity receiver for Fox Metropolitan Playhouses, Inc. By February 1933 economic conditions forced the Brooklyn Fox to close. Employees were given two weeks notice, and the closing was announced to be solely for the purpose of enlarging the stage facilities. The theatre was soon reopened in charge of Harry Arthur, formerly with the Roxy Theatre, with a new admission price policy. The new prices, 25¢ for morning and matinee shows, and a 35¢ maximum for evening shows, spurred attendance, and other theatres followed suit. By July 1933, the Loew-Warner Corporation, negotiating for the purchase of the Fox Metropolitan Theatres Corporation from the bondholders' committee for \$4,000,000 raised their bid by \$500,000. When Fabian Enterprises, operators of another theatre chain, raised their bid to double that sum, although over a five-year term, Loew-Warner withdrew its offer, and Fabian Enterprises took over.

The change in ownership did not affect the patronage of the Fox Theatre. With the 99-year lease to Fabian Enterprises, it was announced that Fox policy would continue unchanged. Although the rise of sound films and the fall of the economy soon ended the stage extravaganzas of the 1920s, audiences remained large for another twenty years. When Radio Station WBNY was installed in William Fox's former eighth-floor quarters in 1934, a direct line to the Fox stage was provided for certain broadcasts. The once-famous program series "Just Plain Bill" began at WBNY, and radio amateur-hour contests originated on the stage of the Brooklyn Fox. However, the

appearance of gifted minors on regular Fox bills after their having won amateur contests drew the wrath of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and resulted in \$500 fines against the theatre management or one-day closures by the License Commission.

On May 29, 1938 a bomb scare at the theatre was handled most efficiently. Police announced that mechanical trouble in the projection room would delay the rest of the showing. The auditorium was searched, ostensibly for a lost seven-carat diamond ring, and the film was resumed after a twenty-minute delay. The bomb threat proved to have been a hoax. In March 1945 amateur night was discontinued "in a drive against bobby-sox juvenile delinquency in movie theatres." "Riotous conduct" by young teen-agers had resulted in 35 arrests before the law barring "admission of unescorted children under 16 before 3 and after 6 p.m." was enforced. On the night of December 12, 1945 the police were again involved after the Fox ticket seller was robbed at gun-point of \$65.

By 1948 previous attendance records were broken as the theatre continued to flourish, and by the summer of 1949 the Fox took the rise of television competition in its stride by introducing the first closed-circuit-telecasts shown in theatres when an audience of 4,000 saw a double film feature plus the June 22 Walcott-Charles fight, which was brought via coaxial cable from Chicago through an arrangement by Fabian Theatres with RCA and NBC. The Fox paid only \$10,000 for exclusive theatre rights to the 1949 World Series and presented the first 200 patrons with pictures of Brooklyn Dodgers star Jackie Robinson. Football followed baseball as the Notre Dame-Southern California game was telecast from South Bend to the Fox.

Telecasts to the Fox in the following years were varied. They included addresses by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower; Notre Dame home games; the December 11, 1952 Metropolitan Opera House performance of Bizet's Carmen, when 1,750 Fox patrons saw and heard Brooklyn natives Richard Tucker as Don José and Robert Merrill as Escamillo; and the Sonny Liston-Floyd Patterson boxing match in 1962, when the screen went dark just before the knockout, and further mayhem was narrowly averted by promising refunds to all ticket stub holders among the 4,000 outraged fight fans who had paid \$7.50 apiece for the two-minute-and-six-second bout. By that year, however, competition from home television sets had already made serious inroads on movie theatre patronage.



Fire in an optician's store on the Nevins Street side of the Fox Theatre Building halted ticket sales for twenty minutes on May 26, 1954, but the 500 patrons already seated were not required to leave. Normal routine was abruptly shattered late one Saturday night in 1957, when an armed robber herded the manager and several employees into the manager's office and escaped with \$5,500. As in the case of the fire, the patrons remained unaware of the excitement so near to them. In 1965 there was a "near riot . . . precipitated by a shrieking, shoving mob of teenagers . . . rampaging . . . over police barriers and jammed traffic as they struggled to get into the theater to hear a rock 'n' roll disk jockey." (Sunday News, October 4, 1970, p. BKL 70)

In 1962 the Brooklyn Fox Corporation, from which Fabian Enterprises had leased the theatre, sold out to Fabian. For four more years Fabian operated against increasing odds. Early in 1966 it was clearly no longer feasible to carry on. On Thursday, February 3 the New York Times headlined reporter Martin Gansberg's bylined piece "The Fox, \$8-Million Film Palace In Brooklyn, Going Dark Sunday." John F. Burke, who started as an usher on opening night and rose to become the theatre's last manager, was quoted as saying, "In the early days, 12,000 people would come to the downtown section on a Saturday night. Now you see only 1,200 to 1,300. This area is becoming a ghost town." Manager Burke's comment aptly summed up the decay of the inner city, which, combined with television, gave the Fox its coup de grace. Attendance on an average night had slumped to around 100. The theatre's 70 employees were given two weeks notice, and with the final showing of William Bendix's Johnny Nobody and David Niven in Where the Spies Are on Sunday, February 6, 1966, the Fox ceased to be a moving picture theatre.

The house lingered in a kind of half-life for a brief span. Some rock-and-roll performances were staged there until April 1968, and later in 1968 the theatre was used by the Salmaggi Grand Opera Company, which failed, leaving behind 345 newly upholstered loge seats, acoustically the poorest in the house. After a Humphrey for President rally that same year, the doors closed. For two years marquee letters spelled out "TEMPORARILY CLOSED: FOR RENT." Before demolition in January 1971, the marquee announced one last performance, "Farewell to the Fox: October 31, 1928 [sic!], to November 4, 1970. Bill Gage at the Mighty Wurlitzer." On January 4, 1971 the New York Times, under a headline reading "Brooklynites Bid a Nostalgic Farewell to the Fox," stated that "The Fox Theater . . . is finally coming down." An office building was scheduled for erection on the site.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Original architectural drawings: A perspective rendering of the Crane office's preliminary design dated September 19, 1926 is in the Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. An undetailed rough partial plan and an unscaled composite longitudinal section are in the possession of Louis Wiltse, AIA, of Detroit, former Crane Associate.
2. Old views: A construction photograph dated April 22, 1928 is in the Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. An exterior view is published in [anon.], Kenneth Franzheim Architect - New York City /New York: Architectural Catalogue Co., Inc., c. 1942/. A view of the main lobby stairway appears in R. W. Sexton (ed.), American Theatres of Today. New York: Architectural Publishing Company, 1930, Vol. 2, p. 22.
3. Bibliography:
  - a. Primary and unpublished sources: Fox Theatre clipping file, Brooklyn Public Library (copy supplied courtesy Elizabeth L. White, Local History Librarian, Brooklyn Public Library); Crane scrapbook (copy supplied courtesy the late Dixon B. Kellogg, former Crane Associate). Copies of both are in HABS files. Interviews - Brother Andrew Corsini, Theatre Historical Society, Notre Dame, IN; H. Terry Helgesen, Theatre Historian, Los Angeles, CA; Helen Hollis, Musical Instruments Division, Smithsonian Institution; Joseph Oldenburg, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; C. Ford Peatross, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress; E. A. Reich, American Institute of Architects Committee on Historic Resources; Charles J. Vogel, AIA, and Louis Wiltse, AIA, both former Crane Associates and both of Detroit.
  - b. Secondary and published sources:

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\_\_\_\_\_, May 28, 1935, "Theater Fined \$500 For Show  
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\_\_\_\_\_, March 22, 1945, "Bobby-Sox Didoes Ban Amateur  
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\_\_\_\_\_, December 13, 1945, "Lone Bandit Holds Up  
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\_\_\_\_\_, June 9, 1948, "Fox Theater Motif Is Undersea  
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Brooklyn Eagle, June 22, 1949, "Theater Crowd Enjoys  
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\_\_\_\_\_, September 29, 1949, "Telecast of Series at  
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\_\_\_\_\_, October 24, 1950, "B'klyn Fox, N.Y. Paramount  
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\_\_\_\_\_, December 12, 1952, "1750 Here Applaud Carmen  
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\_\_\_\_\_, September 28, 1961, "Brooklyn Fox to Tele-  
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\_\_\_\_\_, May 27, 1954, "Smoky Blaze Guts Optician's  
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\_\_\_\_\_, August 15, 1952, "C. Howard Crane, 67, Noted  
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Lucy Pope Wheeler  
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and

Denys Peter Myers  
HABS Architectural Historian  
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## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Fox Theatre was a very large moving picture house in a tripartite building complex on a truncated triangular site. The complex included a twelve-story shop and office building containing the theatre entrance, the theatre auditorium partially fronted by shops, and a nine-story service building that included the stage. The buff brick, limestone, and terra-cotta-trimmed exterior was typical commercial high-rise architecture of its period with a few touches of Art Deco ornament. The lavishly decorated theatre interiors blended freely interpreted Baroque, Art Deco, and East Indian elements, some derived from aquatic motifs. The Fox was ingeniously fitted into its somewhat

cramped site and was the most eclectic in its decor of the five largest theatres built for William Fox at the peak of his career. (Of those five, C. Howard Crane's Brooklyn Fox and Thomas Lamb's San Francisco Fox have been demolished. Crane's Detroit and St. Louis Fox theatres are still intact as of 1979. The Atlanta Fox by Marye, Alger and Vanour with Crane's firm as associate architects has recently been restored to its original splendor.)

2. Condition of fabric: The theatre had been well-maintained. Until demolition began in the grand foyer on November 7, 1970, the general condition, except for limited water damage from leaks in the roof, was excellent. Demolition was completed early in 1971.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building complex occupied most of a triangular site bounded by Nevins and Livingston Streets, whose junction forms a right angle, and by Flatbush Avenue, which forms the hypotenuse of the Triangle. The lot, containing some 29,000 square feet, extended 211'7" along Nevins Street, 262'10" along Flatbush Avenue, and 181'0" along Livingston Street. Toward the apex of the triangle, where Flatbush Avenue and Livingston Street join in a sharp angle, the lot was truncated. There the property line ran southwest at a right angle to Flatbush Avenue for 67'11" and then jogged south for about ten feet to join the Livingston Street lot line at a right angle. Where the junction of Flatbush Avenue and Nevins Street form an approximately 55-degree angle, the corner of the building was blunted by a one-window-wide chamfer. Therefore, the Flatbush Avenue elevation (containing the theatre entrance) and the Nevins Street elevation (containing the office building entrance) were a few feet shorter than the actual lot lines.

The office block was twelve stories high and stood at the junction of Flatbush Avenue and Nevins Street, running along the former for about 110 feet and along the latter for about 115 feet from the chamfered corner. The theatre block was the equivalent of ten stories high on Nevins Street and ran along that street for about 95 feet from the Livingston Street corner to join the office block. The Flatbush Avenue elevation of the theatre was the equivalent of eight to nine stories high and was set back about 22 feet from the front plane. It was fronted by shops surmounted by a wall screening a fire escape. The service building fronting the stage had eight fenestrated stories

plus a blind top story. Variations of height, if any, in the Livingston Street elevation were not recorded.

2. Foundations: The foundations were concrete. Spread footings carried the column loads. The soil was a uniform coarse sand and gravel interspersed with extremely hard compacted matter. (During excavation, special shoring was needed to underpin the adjoining buildings in the apex of the triangle and the Interborough Rapid Transit subway under Flatbush Avenue, including the stairs and approaches to the Nevins Street station.)
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls were faced with unglazed buff brick above a limestone lower zone and had light glazed terra cotta trim. The Livingston Street elevation flanked the auditorium (together with an end of the grand lobby under the balcony) and the stage. This elevation was not recorded in detail. The Nevins Street elevation had two sections, one fronting the office building and the other backing the rear of the auditorium and part of the grand lobby below it. Above the first floor, the theatre wall rose in a sheer cliff of almost unfenestrated brick masonry as far as the seventh-floor level of the adjoining office building. At that height, a broad projecting band course with a cornice spanned the distance between the end bays and "supported" four wide projecting pilaster strips that rose to the top of the wall, dividing the tall upper zone into five vertical sections. The floor above the band course was fenestrated. Other details were not recorded. The office building elevation will be discussed below.

The Flatbush Avenue elevation was tripartite. The service building fronting the stage stood at the southeast end of the property, toward the apex end of the triangular block. The first story of this section had metal and glass shop-fronts capped by a moderately broad plain limestone course. Above this, the brick wall rose eight full stories (seven fenestrated and the top one blind) and was crowned by a tall penthouse. These fenestrated floors each had six fairly close-set windows flanked by very slightly projecting single window bays. The second through sixth floors were identical in height and were unornamented. Those above were taller. The brick spandrels were laid up in "stack" bond with recessed vertical joints, giving a striated effect. High above the seventh-floor windows were shallow stepped corbel arches supported on slightly projecting pilaster strips, and high above each eighth-floor window there was a corbelled brick projection, or

"eyebrow." The outer thirds of the wall were terminated by a terra-cotta coping composed of a narrow band of shallow recessed panels separated by small flat disks, above which was waterleaf cresting. The central third of the wall rose sheer and uninterrupted to the top of the rectangular brick penthouse concealing the water tank and was flanked by tall elongated console buttresses ornamented by large foliate or wave-like motifs of an art deco character. The penthouse coping was like that just described.

The section of the Flatbush Avenue elevation connecting the stage service building and the office building stood about 22 feet in front of the auditorium flank. It corresponded in height to the first three stories of the service building and the first two stories of the office block. Its first story was a continuation of the store front treatment of both other sections of the elevation. The upper portion of this connecting section was a screen wall of buff brick laid up in common bond with headers every sixth row. The screen wall concealed metal fire escapes leading from the auditorium and was perfectly planar except for three very shallowly inset rectangular panels. The screen wall was crowned by a stone coping composed of a band of waterleaf ornament and a plain capping course. The common bond buff brick auditorium flank, set back about 22 feet from the principal plane, rose through the height of eight office building stories. It was plain except for three very shallow tall vertical panels with stepped corbelled tops. The coping was like that crowning the service building facade.

The office building, occupying the corner site at Flatbush Avenue and Nevins Street and towering twelve stories in height, was the most prominent element of the tripartite complex. Each street elevation had four structural, or major, bays, seven of which were identical above the first floor. As previously noted, the corner of the office building was chamfered, a one-window-wide bay at an approximately 60° angle to the two street elevations making the transition between them. At the west end of the Nevins Street elevation, adjoining the theatre block, there was another one-window-wide minor bay. The eighth major bay, which contained the theatre entrance facing Flatbush Avenue at the south end of the office block, will be described later. The first floor of the other bays contained shop fronts of varying widths, and, at the west end of the Nevins Street elevation adjoining the theatre block, the office building entrance under a flat marquee. The metal and glass shop-front structure projected beyond the



plane of the chamfer above it to form an apex blunted by a shorter chamfer. The shop fronts were crowned by a broad sheet metal frieze troughed for signs and capped by a narrow band of simple stamped or molded ornament.

The second floor was faced with limestone ashlar and was almost twice as high as the other stories. Each second-floor structural bay (except the blind bay over the theatre entrance) contained one large window spanning its breadth. The upper floors were clad in buff brick and were all equal in height. Their structural bays were each divided into two subsidiary bays containing paired windows. This arrangement was articulated by very elongated common bond piers. The piers between structural bays were compound, their wide forward faces (in the same plane as the second-floor ashlar) rising uninterrupted through the roof coping, and their slightly recessed flanking portions rising through the twelfth story. The simple intermediate piers dividing each structural bay into two subsidiary bays rose without any break almost up to the roof coping and were in the same plane as the flanking sections of the compound piers. These vertical elements "supported" shallow stepped arches with slightly splayed keystones above the twelfth-floor paired windows. The mullions separating the paired windows continued uninterrupted through the spandrels up to the eleventh floor as narrow pier strips. The spandrels below the eleventh floor were in "stack" bond with recessed vertical joints, further increasing the verticality of the facade design. The spandrels between tenth and eleventh stories had shallow stepped arches "supported" on the mullion strips. The mullion strips that continued through the upper two stories were "supported" by stepped bases projecting slightly from these spandrels and terminated in slightly splayed blocks between the twelfth-floor window lintels. The spandrels between the eleventh and twelfth stories had very slightly projecting square panels. The coping of these office building bays was like that of the service building and auditorium flank but was interrupted by the higher stylized foliate antefixes capping the pier strips between the structural bays.

The structural bay containing the theatre entrance was wider than the others, containing three subsidiary bays instead of two. It projected slightly forward from the rest of the wall plane. The theatre entrance was emphasized by a frontispiece that rose through the fourth story. Above the slab-like marquee sheltering the simple entrance itself, the high second story was sheathed in

white terra-cotta ashlar penetrated by a low elliptical compound arch almost spanning the bay. At either side, waterleaf-ornamented pier capitals spread inward and supported large abaci whose outer faces were each ornamented by Vitruvian scrolls, or wave motifs. Anthemion-ornamented consoles sprang from the inner faces of the abaci. The waterleaf-edged elliptical arch sprang, in turn, from the inner faces of the consoles. Thus, the compound arch was composed of the concave soffits of the capitals, the scrolled soffits of the consoles, and the low elliptical sweep of the central section, whose soffit was paneled. Within the deep reveal of the archway, the large tympanum was ornamented by reticulate panels.

Above each of the plain archway spandrels, there was a small square panel ornamented by addorsed C-scrolls. The tall foliated keystone of the arch "supported" a boldly projecting ornamental motif that spread across the full width of the central subsidiary bay. That motif was composed of a large acanthus leaf flanked by inverted helices attached to it by flowing bands of ogee curvature above which were anthemias capped by bead-and-reel molding. The whole motif was crowned by a narrow cavetto molding. The cavetto molding interlocked with a narrow wave-ornamented cyma recta molding that extended below the window sills of the two flanking subsidiary bays.

The third-and-fourth-floor portion of the frontispiece was faced with light gray limestone ashlar and molded terra cotta. This upper zone was flanked by limestone slabs that projected very slightly in four different planes and ended vertically at four varying heights, giving an irregularly stepped outline against the brick outer margins of the flanking piers. The two piers separating the subsidiary bays were clad in terra cotta up to the middle of the fifth story. Their ornamentation consisted of a greatly elongated countersunk panel with an extremely slender stalk bearing highly conventionalized leaves and terminating in a bud, possibly representing a lotus. The three terra-cotta mullions between the paired third and fourth-floor windows continued through the plain limestone spandrels and were each ornamented by a spirally banded stem-like shaft terminating in a foliate capital. The wide spandrel above the central pair of fourth-floor windows contained a shallow compound arch interrupted by a strongly projecting burst of foliation "supported" by the mullion capital. This spandrel was capped by a narrow band of standard Greek waterleaf

molding. The two wide flanking spandrels were ornamented by scrolls spreading laterally from the mullion capitals and ending in inverted helices. These spandrels were spanned by wide bands of simplified waterleaf ornament supporting five courses of brick.

Above the frontispiece itself, the pier lines continued without break to the top of the building. This, together with the slight forward projection of the entire structural bay, gave a markedly vertical emphasis above the second floor that unified the frontispiece with the rest of the bay. Above the fourth story, the mullion strips continued through brick square-paneled spandrels up to the eleventh floor, where large boldly projecting semi-elliptical molded corbels suggested conventionalized buds on mullion-strip stalks. Above the "buds," the mullion strips resumed their rise, passing through "stacked-bond" spandrels between the eleventh and twelfth stories, to terminate in very elongated slightly splayed terra-cotta keystones. The keystones divided very shallow tall stepped blind arches above the twelfth-floor windows. The central keystone "supported" a burst of strongly projecting foliation spanning the subsidiary bay below a rectangular terra cotta tablet. The tablet, in the parapet block crowning the whole structural bay, contained a sunken panel bearing the word FOX in relief block letters, the upper bar of the "F" extending over the somewhat smaller "O" and "X." The tablet was crowned by a projecting foliate motif flanked by scrolls. Flanking the tablet, above the other two keystones, there were tall narrow blind rectangular slots.

The parapet block was about a half-story higher than the rest of the coping and rose in three steps. The outer edges of the flanking piers were crowned by stylized foliate antefixes like, and at the same height as, those capping the rest of the main pier strips. The wider portions of the flanking pier strips were capped by a plain coping above a narrow molding. The wide central section was capped by a crested coping above a narrow band of small bosses and was accented against the sky by tall palmette antefixes at its center and two corners.

4. Structural system: The structural system was not recorded. However, photographs taken during demolition confirm the use of very large steel girders in the auditorium support system.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Except for the theatre entrance, doorways and doors were not recorded in detail. In the Livingston Street elevation, there was a row of grand lobby exit doors about 25 feet wide near the corner of Nevins Street. Nearby, there was a set of auditorium exit doors, and about 100 feet southeastward there was another set of auditorium exit doors. About 20 feet beyond those exits was a set of four twelve-foot-high scene doors opening to the stage. On Nevins Street, there was a grand lobby exit sheltered by a marquee near the corner, and another exit, apparently unsheltered, between the corner exit and the office building entrance, which had a marquee. From that entrance to the Flatbush Avenue corner about 85 feet away, there were shop fronts with standard entrances under rectangular transoms.

On Flatbush Avenue, the stage entrance was at the southeast end of the building, about 135 feet from the theatre entrance. Between those entrances were two adjacent sets of auditorium exits, each about 15 feet wide. There were shop fronts with standard single or paired-door entrances under rectangular transoms along most of this elevation. The theatre entrance was over 40 feet wide and about 75 feet from the corner of the office block. It was sheltered under a marquee, above which were the low elliptical compound arch and blind tympanum already described. The entrance itself was very slightly inset from the facade plane. It was flanked by display panels and divided in the middle by a ticket booth. The booth was a wide irregular hexagon in plan, having a projecting three-sided bay window, straight sides, and a back at a right angle to the sides. There was a set of three glass-paneled doors at each side of the booth, all, including the booth, set below a wide rectangular display board.

- b. Windows: Except for the shop windows and the second-floor windows of the office block, all but one tier of windows (in the theatre entrance bay) had double-hung one-over-one-light metal sash set within fairly deep reveals. The fenestration, if any, of the Livingston Street elevation was not recorded. Only single second and third-floor windows at the Livingston Street end, and sets of three fifth and sixth-floor windows at the office building end, appear to

have pierced the Nevins Street elevation of the theatre block below about the eighth-floor level, where a row of about 10 or 15 windows existed. As previously noted, the stage service block had a bay of six close-set windows flanked by single-window bays. There were three tall rectangular windows, the central one taller than the others, in the penthouse facade. A single tier of service block windows faced northeast across the exit area toward the office block. At the eighth-floor level, there were three windows with elongated slightly splayed keystones in the auditorium flank. A tier of simple railed openings facing southeast toward the service block lighted an exterior office building fire escape above the fourth floor. The fire escape began a roofed descent against, and parallel with, the auditorium flank at the fourth-floor level.

The office block had standard metal-supported plate glass shop windows on the first floor. The second floor had large metal-framed tripartite horizontal windows spanning each structural bay except the theatre entrance bay. These units protruded very slightly beyond the wall plane and had large horizontal rectangular fixed central lights flanked by narrower pivoted vertical lights, the whole resembling the "Chicago window" form. The chamfered bay and the Nevins Street bay adjoining the theatre block each had a single-light pivoted sash. The windows of the theatre entrance bay will be described below. As noted above, all other windows had one-over-one-light double-hung metal sash in fairly deep reveals. The third-floor paired windows had continuous molded sills carved with waterleaf ornament. The windows above had plain thin rectangular stone sills divided in two by narrow mortar joints. The eleventh-floor window sills were "supported" by five-course-high slightly projecting stepped brick corbels. The lintels of the third through ninth-floor windows had metal-supported flat arches composed of vertically set brick headers. The tenth and eleventh-floor windows had flat-arch lintels of metal-supported stretchers. Each twelfth-floor pair of windows had elaborate lintels composed of facing stepped terracotta panels of swirling wave-like ornament separated by the slightly splayed blocks capping the mullion strips.

The second story of the theatre entrance bay was blind. The floors above were all fenestrated. The southeasternmost tier of windows had double-hung metal two-over-two-light sash. The other sash was one-over-one light, like the rest of the building. The lintels were metal-supported flat-arch brick above the fourth floor, and the sills were like those in the rest of the building. The third and fourth-floor lintels were integral parts of the limestone and terra-cotta spandrels described above. The twelfth-floor lintels had shallow brick stepped arches ornamenting their surfaces.

6. Roofs: The roofs were not recorded. The office building and stage service building evidently had flat roofs, probably with built-up surfaces. Probably the roof over the Nevins Street end of the theatre block was also flat with a built-up surface. One photograph shows a barely visible gabled roof with truncated southeast end over the auditorium. Paterson says, "The stage house continued up to a height of 75 feet and was topped by a huge skylight painted . . . black." There was a tall brick penthouse set a little back from the plane of the Nevins Street elevation over the office building main stairs and two elevator shafts. It had shallow pilaster strips, elongated rectangular windows near its top, and coping like the rest of the office building. The low roof of the water tower penthouse over the stage service block was pyramidal or conical.
7. Marquees: The cantilevered slab-like marquee at the theatre entrance was rectangular in plan, was over 40 feet long, and projected the full width of the sidewalk. The flat front fascia had a seven-rank back-lit attraction board edged at top and bottom and in its soffit by two rows of incandescent bulbs. The attraction boards at each end were similarly edged and were two ranks higher than the front board. They were surmounted by large hollow block letters containing red neon tubing and spelling FOX. There were smaller flat marquees, apparently suspended, over the office building entrance and the grand lobby exit near the Livingston Street corner on Nevins Street.
8. Signs: An illuminated vertical sign about 60 feet high reading FOX THEATRE was cantilevered at a right angle from the Flatbush Avenue elevation at the Nevins Street corner. It ran from the third through the eighth story. High above the roof, a very large horizontal neon sign

reading FOX THEATRE was raised on an open metal framework and faced northeast. The upper bar of the "F" in "FOX" extended the width of the sign above the "O" and "X." "THEATRE" ran across in smaller but still very large letters below "FOX."

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Except for an unscaled sketch plan of the orchestra level and a rough outline with a few dimensions indicated, no floor plans have been found.
  - a. Basements: The sub-basement contained very large furnace and machinery rooms. The basement is reported to have contained scene docks; two large rooms; doors to the orchestra pit and original organ console lift; the musicians' room; and property rooms, all presumably under the stage, as well as generator rooms; an organ relay and blower room; offices; workshops; various storage rooms; and, "across the hall," the ushers' recreation and dressing rooms. "If one continue/d/ down the hall past the smaller shops, one eventually wound up just a doorway away from the ladies' lounge . . . ." (Paterson, "Farewell . . .") There were men's and women's retiring suites below the grand lobby, or foyer:

Below the orchestra level of the grand foyer are the perfectly equipped lounge and retiring rooms. The women's suite consists of a large lounge, Louis XV in period; a smoking room finished in pale peach stucco; an elliptical cosmetic room with silk covered walls, and the wash room. (Brooklyn Eagle, "New Fox Theater, Gorgeous in Design . . .," August 31, 1928)

The men's suite was not described or recorded. These suites were reached by stairways under the grand staircase and under stairs at the southwest end of the grand lobby.

- b. Orchestra level: Beyond the shallow 40-foot-wide entrance, there was a semielliptical vestibule with a stairway at its northwest side. Four or five sets of adjacent paired doors led southwest from this vestibule to an inner vestibule that had a short lateral passage leading to the most eastern aisle

entrance to the auditorium. Three sets of paired doors led from the inner vestibule to the grand lobby. The floors of both vestibules sloped upward.

The grand lobby was 26 feet wide, about 135 feet long, and approximately 60 feet high. It was moderately curved in plan, following the contour of the rear of the auditorium orchestra level. The narrowness of this lofty space was dictated by the cramped building site. As previously noted, there were two sets of exits onto Nevins Street in the northwest wall and a set of exits onto Livingston Street at the narrow end opposite the main entrance. A partially enclosed stairway ran southwest against the northwest wall, and the grand staircase, to be described later, rose in opposed flights against the northwest wall to a central bridge spanning the lobby and leading to an open passage at the rear of the mezzanine. Stairs to the basement men's and women's rooms descended beneath these stairways, running northeast. A cashier's office and a closet opened northwest from underneath the bridge. Paired doors opened from the southeast wall into four of the five auditorium aisles. (The easternmost aisle opened from the inner vestibule.) The grand lobby rose through four stories. The southeast wall had large openings at the mezzanine and lower balcony levels, revealing narrow curving passages giving access to the rear of the mezzanine and to vomitoria leading to the lower cross aisle of the balcony. There was no room for mezzanine or balcony lobbies, or foyers. Above each of the two southeast wall tiers of large openings, there was a smaller opening at the fourth-story level.

The narrow southwest wall had a single tall aperture at the third-story level that opened onto part of the enclosed stairway to the level of the upper balcony vomitoria. Three large openings in the narrow northeast wall revealed the stairs and passages above the vestibules. Those stairs also ascended to the level of the upper balcony vomitoria. At the lower balcony (third-story) level, there were men's and women's lounges and washrooms in this area. The manager's office was on the fifth floor. Curiously, there were no elevators for theatre patrons. Their omission was apparently to economize space. Clear glass panels looked into the auditorium at the orchestra level and from the mezzanine passage. Along with the larger wall openings, they helped to mitigate the somewhat



claustrophobic effect of the unusually narrow and very tall grand lobby.

The auditorium was about 126 feet deep from the curtain line to the rear of the orchestra level. The distance from the pit rail to the rear of the orchestra was 104 feet. The extreme width was approximately 131 feet, with the walls converging to a width of not much more than 50 feet at the proscenium. Thus, the shape of the sloping orchestra floor was rather like a truncated wedge. There were exits at both the front and rear of the side aisles. The seating was divided into four rising sections by a central aisle and two intermediate aisles between it and the side aisles. The two outer sections of seating were divided about a third of the way back by cross aisles, the forward section of the left-hand section being known as the "children's section." Short flights of steps led from the side aisles to the stage. The seating capacity of the orchestra level has been variously given as 1,981 (architect's rough sketch) or 1,849 (Paterson), a discrepancy of 132. As the architect's figure was preliminary, and as Paterson had the "original American Seating Company blueprints," the latter figure would seem to be the correct one.

The proscenium opening was 50 feet wide and 35 feet high. The irregularly shaped stage area originally had an extreme depth of 39 feet and six inches to the curtain line, but an extension cantilevered over part of the orchestra pit soon gave the stage a depth of 47 feet. The stage had a width of about 90 feet at its widest point, giving 20-foot wings at each side of the 50-foot-wide proscenium. The scene doors were at grade on Livingston Street but some five feet above the stage floor. Probably moveable ramps were used to shift scenery in and out of the building. The stage door was at the southwest end of the stage service building on Flatbush Avenue. An entranceway led past a single elevator on the right and a service stairway on the left to the stage itself, opening behind the cyclorama. The stage loft rose to about 75 feet above the floor.

- c. Mezzanine level: All of the mezzanine was under the balcony soffit, most of it placed far back. The sides of the mezzanine swung forward in a set of convex and concave curves, but the long slightly concave central section of the mezzanine parapet was overhung by a trifle more than 37 feet. The distance from the curtain line to the middle of that parapet was 97 feet and three inches, whereas the center of the slightly concave balcony parapet was only 60 feet and six inches from the curtain line. That placement probably accounted for the poor acoustics of the mezzanine, which evidently contained 345 seats (Paterson). (The architect's preliminary sketch proposed a capacity of 428 for that area, a difference of 83 seats.) The mezzanine was reached from a narrow curving rear passage open to the grand lobby. The grand stairway and its bridge, as well as the stairways at either end of the grand lobby, led to that mezzanine passage.
- d. Balcony levels: The height of the auditorium from the orchestra floor to the top of the domed ceiling was 96 feet. The rear wall of the steeply rising balcony was about 146 feet from the curtain line, making the depth of the balcony around 86 feet. Two cross aisles divided the balcony into three levels, the lowest being a loge section of four rows of seats. Each cross aisle was reached by two vomitoria approached from rear passages, the lower one of which, and possibly the upper one also, was open to the grand lobby. Both cross aisles had an exit at each end. The loge seats and 13-row middle level were divided into five sections by stepped aisles. The 12-row upper level was divided by stepped aisles into seven sections. The front wall of the projection room stood slightly forward of the rear, reducing the central section by one row. The seating capacity of the balcony was given on the architect's outline sketch as 1,896 and by Paterson as 1,866, a discrepancy of only 30. The total auditorium discrepancy between the two sources was 245, still fairly minor compared with the capacity of 5,000 claimed by press releases in 1928. The locations of the organ chambers will be described later.
- e. Office building: No plans of the office building have been found. That roughly triangular block had an irregularly-shaped Nevins Street entrance lobby about 35 feet wide containing a stairway and two

elevators. William Fox had a suite of rooms, later used as Radio Station WBNY, "over the projection room on the eighth floor." (Paterson) The only two connections between the office block and the theatre were through a "secret door," apparently between the elevator lobby of the office building and the grand lobby "near the fish-tank," (Paterson) and through a passage connecting the Fox apartment and the stage service building. The passage, lighted by three windows facing Flatbush Avenue, ran above the auditorium ceiling and connected Fox's suite with the eighth-floor rehearsal hall.

- f. Stage service building: Between the stage service building and the office building, there was a row of one-story shops flanking the auditorium. The row was surmounted by a screen wall, was about 21 feet deep, and extended for about 70 feet between the theatre entrance and the auditorium exits onto Flatbush Avenue. The stage entrance containing a stairway and one elevator was about 40 feet long and ten feet wide, running southwest up a few steps from its Flatbush Avenue door. Above first-floor shops, the rectangular stage service building contained single dressing rooms for stars, larger dressing rooms for duos and teams, and very large chorus dressing rooms. The eighth floor contained the rehearsal hall and the music library. The costume shop occupied an un-fenestrated room on the ninth floor. (Paterson)
2. Stairways: Except for the grand staircase, stairways were not recorded. A partial view of a northwestward run of the stairway at the southwest end of the grand lobby could be seen through the vertical opening in the southwest wall. It appears to have had a closed metal stringer surmounted by a relatively light and simple wrought-iron railing. A portion of the stairway over the vestibules was visible through openings in the northeast wall of the grand foyer. It appears to have had a Sienna marble closed stringer and a light wrought-iron railing containing a heart-shaped motif.

The grand staircase ascended 17 steps in two opposed runs against the northwest wall of the grand lobby to a landing. Six additional steps led southeast to a bridge spanning the lobby and leading to the mezzanine passage, which was open to the grand lobby. The stair runs and bridge appear to have been about ten feet wide and were flanked by broad

parapets of verde antique marble. Above verde-antique-faced walls, each inset with an elaborately scrolled gilded plaster triangular grille, the stair parapets ramped upward in three steps capped by ogee scrolls of relaxed profile, and verde antique dados responded to the parapet outlines. The heavy square marble newel block at the foot of each flight had a rebated outer corner and supported a tall torchère composed of a cluster of gold-colored metal tubes indirectly lit from the lotiform bowls out of which they rose. The large central shaft had a pierced collar and faceted frosted glass top. At the landing, there was a large and elaborate fountain (to be described later) in front of a wall niche. The bridge parapets were "supported" by gilded elongated flattened compound egg-and-dart and acanthus-edged consoles above squat and heavy verde antique piers with gilded capitals making up over a third of their height. The capitals were composed of superposed foliate moldings, waterleaf and acanthus bordered at top and bottom by simpler leaf moldings. The ends of the parapets toward the stair landing were in the form of inverted scrolled consoles that were anthemion-carved on both faces. The outer face of each bridge parapet was inset with a large rectangular bas-relief panel of gilded plaster bearing a conventionalized feline head, probably representing a lion, flanked by wing motifs and stylized sails. The base of each parapet was ornamented by gilded running moldings, waterleaf, fillet, and Vitruvian scroll. The ends of the parapets nearest the mezzanine passage carried conventionalized gilded dolphins whose tails curved upward in a 45° angle to "support" consoles at each end of the rectangular opening into the passage from the bridge. The inner faces of the ramping parapets were furnished with brass handrails.

3. Flooring: The flooring was not recorded in detail. The upward-sloping floors of the two vestibules were paved with ceramic tiles. The grand lobby floor was thickly carpeted, as were the floors of the mezzanine and balcony passages, which appear to have had marble borders on the lobby side. The sloping orchestra floor, stepped balcony floor, and flat mezzanine floor of the auditorium almost certainly conformed to standard construction practice and may therefore be presumed to have been formed of concrete. All auditorium aisles were carpeted. "Somebody . . . had managed to cover most of the /wooden/ stage floor with peeling white linoleum . . . ." (Paterson) The tile floor in the entrance hall of the former Fox apartment was inset with the call letters of radio station WBNY.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The finish of the vestibules was not recorded in detail. The outer vestibule had walls reported to have been "polished Sienna Travertine marble." (Brooklyn Eagle, August 31, 1928) The inner vestibule was described as "gilt and teakwood." (Paterson) The ceilings were plaster. That of the outer vestibule had "a sky treatment, starting from a deep cerulean blue and, as the dome rises, becoming a cobalt shade at the upper reaches." (Brooklyn Eagle, August 31, 1928) The finish of the women's lounges below the grand lobby, or foyer, has been mentioned above in the section on floor plans (C. I. a.) One of the men's smoking rooms, either in the basement or at the lower balcony level, had "Spanish" décor.

The lower level of the grand lobby was sheathed in verde antique marble. The glazed sections of the auditorium wall were set above teakwood panels "inlaid with the signs of the zodiac." (Paterson) The upper three levels of the grand lobby were articulated into longitudinal bays by colossal Sienna marble pilasters. A pair of colossal Sienna marble engaged columns separated the three bays at the Flatbush Avenue end of the lobby. The openings into the mezzanine and lower balcony level passages contained metal spandrels and railings. The longitudinal bays opposite the openings contained mural paintings on canvas above a broad band of gilded plaster ornament that continued across each end of the lobby. The bay at the staircase landing contained (within the mural) a blue-painted indirectly lighted fountain niche elaborately framed in gilded plaster, and the subsidiary bays flanking the landing bay contained back-lit grille-fronted niches. The opposite subsidiary bays had light-blue-painted walls framed between the Sienna marble pilasters by red and gold plasterwork. The remaining plain plaster wall surfaces were painted a red-orange color and are said to have been originally covered with "a soft silk of apricot hue." (Brooklyn Eagle, August 31, 1928) The openings in the end walls and above the lower balcony level passage were elaborately framed in molded and gilded plaster. The pilasters "supported" extremely large and complex compound corbels and squinches of lavishly gilded plaster that in turn "supported" the deeply coffered gilded and polychromed plaster ceiling.

The mezzanine and lower balcony level passages had plaster-paneled walls articulated by Sienna marble piers, or pilaster strips. The railings guarding the openings into

the grand lobby were apparently bronze. The inner faces of the spandrels of the compound arches heading the openings of the lower balcony level passage were finished, between plaster trim, with what appears to have been cut velvet or very heavily flocked wallpaper. The ceilings of both passages were plaster. The wall and ceiling finish of the upper balcony level passage was not recorded.

The auditorium walls at the orchestra level were finished with Sienna marble above a low base of verde antique marble. The balcony had ramped dados of Sienna marble. The other wall surfaces were heavily gilded and painted plaster vigorously molded in high relief. The mezzanine and balcony soffits and the domed ceiling of the auditorium were plaster. The ceiling was formed on, and partially supported by, wire mesh described as "chicken wire." (Paterson) The wall and ceiling finish of other areas of the theatre, and the interiors of the office block and stage service building were not recorded.

5. Openings: The paired doors of the vestibules and those leading from the grand lobby into the auditorium were apparently bronze or brass. Each contained a single large plate glass panel and had a high kick plate and two horizontal bars with a pierced ornamental push plate between them. Many had pneumatic closers. The set of six paired doors between the inner vestibule and the grand lobby were placed below a continuous metal-framed low transom containing three etched glass panels above each pair of doors. The middle panel of each set was etched with the word EXIT in red letters, and the flanking panels had formalized foliate designs. In the auditorium, the exits near the orchestra pit had two sets of paired plain single-paneled extruded metal doors set below similar transoms. The balcony exits each had one pair of plain single-paneled extruded metal doors within Sienna marble-framed rectangular openings. The other doors, doorways, and windows were not recorded.
6. Decorative features and trim: The inner vestibule apparently had a ceiling "supported" by wide elongated compound gilded corbels like those "supporting" the bridge from the grand staircase landing to the mezzanine passage. The central portion of the ceiling apparently had a circular cove-lit lacunar edged with a gilded foliate molding.

In the northeast quarter of the grand lobby, there was originally a marble fish tank and fountain "replaced in

the forties by an even huger mirrored cardboard /sic!/? candy counter." (Paterson) The counter was glass-fronted and rested on a verde antique marble base that may have been a part of the original tank. The counter was lighted by six rather flimsy rectangular box-like canopies suspended from metal rods affixed to the northwest wall.

Above the verde antique marble lower zone containing the entrances, the end bays of the three-bayed northeast wall of the grand lobby were angled moderately inward. A broad band of gilded plaster ornament formed a parapet corresponding in height to the mezzanine passage railings. It contained three panels separated by large corbel-supported plinths below two engaged Sienna marble columns. Each plinth had a large panel framed by egg-and-dart molding and containing an oval patera. The flanking panels had bas-relief chimerical beasts with bird's heads, lion's forepaws, and the bodies of winged dragons. The central panel bore a highly conventionalized and very boldly projecting ship's prow motif above bas-relief waves. The prow supported a scroll-flanked plinth bearing a tall "cut glass sunburst lamp," (Paterson) a standing fixture in the art deco manner that was removed to a private collection before HABS photographs were taken. The columns rose through two full stories (corresponding to the mezzanine and lower balcony levels). The lower ends of their shafts had three gilded foliate bandings above foliated bases, and their gilded Corinthianesque capitals had inverted helices. The two-storied openings of the flanking bays had ogee-shouldered arched tops headed by short flat lintels and were framed by broad gilded plaster acanthus moldings edged by bead-and-reel moldings. They were crowned by broken pediments with extended outer volutes and central acanthus finials.

Above the ship's prow motif, the central opening was elaborately framed by paneled pilaster motifs, each containing three vertical dolphins with fronds (seaweed?) in their mouths, and a projecting canopy composed of three tiers of concave foliated cornice fragments that ultimately joined to support an imbricated pyramidal roof with a very large finial in the form of a lobed compound shell motif. (This gilded baldachin motif may possibly have been suggested by 18th-century Rococo Chinoiserie examples.) The roof and its finial rose high into the upper zone of the wall, i.e., the fourth-floor level, and were set within a very shallow compound arch-headed niche. At each side of the niche, there was a pine cone ornament

suspended from a small dragon's head. Over each side bay, the upper zone contained three vertical strips of bas-relief acanthus forming a broad band of gilded ornament. The engaged columns separating the bays supported, in the upper zone, large gilded foliated blocks crowned by boldly projecting tall multi-scrolled gilded ornaments. At both levels within the three openings, there were simple metal railings with braces suggesting Gothic arches. The metal spandrels at the lower balcony level were unornamented. In the stair areas beyond the openings, extensive Sienna marble wall surfaces were visible.

The opposite (southwest) wall was simpler. It was open at the lower level and was supported on a beam ornamented by superposed bands of gilded running moldings - egg-and-dart, acanthus, enriched fillets, and Vitruvian scroll. Above the moldings, there was a plain band of Sienna marble topped by three panels containing gilded grilles. The central panel repeated the pattern of the bridge parapet panels, and the flanking panels repeated the chimerical beasts in the corresponding panels of the northeast wall. This paneled band of gilded ornament formed a dado motif for the wall area above the lower zone and was capped by a wave-motif rail, pierced as a grille on this southwest wall but solid on the northeast and northwest walls.

A tall opening was centered in the middle and upper zones of the southwest wall. The plain metal stringer of an open-railed stairway crossed the opening diagonally. The gilded plaster frame of the opening was a slightly shorter repetition of the baldachin motif surrounding the central opening of the opposite wall. Instead of the ship's prow motif that was at the base of the latter, there was a curved sill supported by a large gilded corbel ornamented with foliated Rococo scrolls, a shell at its base, and what appears to have been a central ram's head. Just above the sill, there was a low gilded bas-relief parapet within the opening. The rest of this wall was a plain expanse of red-orange plaster, except for the corner pilasters and the immense gilded corbels they supported. Above the dado motif, the mere corners of baseless Sienna marble pilasters and their gilded capitals were visible at each side of the wall. The capital fragments supported extremely large six-part compound corbels that rose through the height of the upper zone and projected more than a third of the grand lobby's 26-foot width.



Above the verde antique lower level, the somewhat concave northwest wall was divided by Sienna marble pilasters into three major bays with narrower bays between them. The two narrow bays had "dadoes," ornamented with gilded bas-relief plaster against a red-orange ground, that curved downward into the Sienna marble set above the ramped verde antique dadoes of the grand staircase. Portions of the ornament resembled elongated Corinthian capitals. Above, the narrow bays had red-orange plaster walls into which were inserted tall indirectly lighted niches painted light blue and fronted by gilded foliated grilles with pointed tops. These two bays were each headed by a waterleaf-ornamented architrave; a frieze of five vertical rows of acanthus (flanked by pilaster-supported projecting compound corbels); and a cornice of superposed convex and concave enriched moldings corresponding in width to the upper components of the consoles. These elements were gilded. Between the niches and the flanking pilasters, there were very slender gilded vertical shafts attached at their tops to extensions of the pilasters capitals. Voluted brackets projecting within the narrow bays at a 45° angle from the pilaster capital extensions supported waterleaf finials whose pine-cone tops touched the architrave soffits. Between the finials, a single baluster-form pine-cone-tipped acanthus pendant hung from each architrave.

The three principal bays of the northwest wall had gilded plaster dadoes above the lower level. The three dado panels in each end bay repeated the chimerical beast design already described and were set above Sienna marble. All three bays contained mural paintings suggesting fanciful Venetian scenes framed by the flanking Sienna marble pilasters and the gilded lateral compound corbels springing from their capitals. A voluted bracket supporting a waterleaf finial extended laterally from each capital into the canvas at each side near the tops of the murals. In the central bay, which faced the stair landing, there were two chimerical dado panels set above verde antique marble and separated by a verde antique fountain basin to be described presently. A large portion of the central mural was interrupted by an indirectly lighted niche painted light blue and lavishly framed by a virtual repetition of the gilded baldachin motif in the central bay of the northeast wall. Here the motif was flanked and visually buttressed by two gilded tiers of volute-topped acanthus braced by stylized gilded waves that extended almost to the edges of the bay. The frame varied from its northeast counterpart in having two extremely attenuated spirally banded Corinthianesque

colonettes, each supporting an inner section of the canopy and braced by three diagonal ligatures attaching it to its flanking dolphin-ornamented pilaster motif.

That elaborately framed niche facing the grand staircase landing, together with the bronze fountain below it, formed perhaps the most notable decorative feature of the grand lobby. The fountain basin stood at dado height on an approximately rectangular verde antique marble plinth with chamfered corners. A bronze cresting composed of a central acroterion-backed volute flanked by a pair of vicious-looking fish with serrated teeth capped the front edge of the plinth and was supported by similar but larger fish whose scrolled tails supported the forward ends of the basin. The basin was lavishly ornamented by scrolled foliation and was set against a low wall of verde antique marble that was plain except for a bronze animal-head spout of saurian mien and its foliated and voluted enframement. The bronzework appears to have been skillfully cast and of excellent quality. Above the low marble backing wall of the fountain, the gilded plaster scroll-flanked plinth above the ship's prow motif at the central opening of the northeast wall was repeated. The plinth supported a tall gilded plaster pedestal composed of a square acanthus-ornamented tier, a smaller and shorter circular acanthus-ornamented tier, and the concave waterleaf-ornamented circular base supporting the head of a female diety. Whether or not it was ever intended to ascribe an identity to that severe-looking head cannot be determined from the remaining evidence. Attributions have ranged from Paterson's facetious mention of Eve Leo (Mrs. William Fox) to HABS Writer/Editor Lucy Pope Wheeler's serious reference to the water nymph Arethusa, the subject of an ancient myth and of the familiar poem by Shelley. The grand staircase and the bridge connecting the stair landing with the southeast wall have been described above in the section on stairways.

The slightly convex southeast wall of the grand lobby corresponded in its bay arrangement with the opposite wall just described. The Sienna marble pilasters of this southeast wall rose from verde antique marble plinths on the lower level and had gilded plaster bases composed of two acanthus bands separated by a waterleaf band. The two narrower bays had light-blue-painted plaster walls above the lower level, which contained paired doors into the auditorium. The dado motif of the opposite bays was supplanted here by spandrels ornamented with projecting elements of gilded plaster

somewhat resembling stylized ship prows and bearing tall elaborated finials. The slender vertical shafts were painted red-orange instead of the gilt of their opposite counterparts. These southwest narrow bays contained no niches.

At the lower level, the three wide bays contained windows looking into the auditorium above the aforementioned teak panels carved with zodiacal symbols. The bays were open for their full width at the second and third (mezzanine and lower balcony) levels. Very slender metal stanchions rose through the lower and second levels to divide each wide bay into thirds. Below the third level, the stanchions burst into openwork foliation that spread upward into the central spandrel and ended in seed clusters. The elongated and foliated stanchion capitals flanked that spandrel and supported the circular vasiform posts of the third-level railings. In the end bays, the plain paneled second-level spandrels were capped by relatively simple Art Deco railings of a swag and fleuron pattern. The central second-level wide bay contained the opening from the bridge already described in the section on stairways.

The third-level central spandrel carried minor foliation and a pair of large addorsed volutes. The other spandrels were ornamented with a row of bas-relief fleurons alternating with fleurs-de-lys. The posts of the third-level railings had lidded urn finials and flanked a railing section resembling a low arch-headed gate. The flanking sections arched upward in a broken pediment design, and the whole railing design had a freely interpreted Adamesque flavor. Within the wide-bay reveals, Sienna marble antae rose to support the gilded plaster foliated low compound arches that headed the third-level openings. Above those three arches, the fourth-level red-orange-painted plaster walls were penetrated by comparatively small centered openings headed by compound arches and framed by bas-relief gilded Baroque plaster. Those wall sections were flanked, like those opposite, by lateral compound corbels supported on the Sienna marble pilasters. All of the grand lobby bays were originally fitted with gold-fringed "henna velvet overdrapes." (Brooklyn Eagle, August 31, 1928) A photograph reproduced on page 22 of Sexton, American Theatres of Today . . . , Vol. 2, shows them clearly.

The most conspicuous feature of the grand lobby ceiling was the huge compound corbels that extended outward almost across the room and laterally above the wide bays of the

northwest and southeast walls. It was those corbels, along with the red-orange color of much of the wall area and the lavish use of gilding, that gave the grand lobby its vaguely "Indian temple" aspect. Above the pilaster capitals, each of the gilded plaster corbels was composed of six elements, each projecting beyond the one below it. A concave bracket bearing three vertical acanthus leaves supported an element of conventional acanthus console form that in turn supported a standard waterleaf console above which was a convex acanthus bracket supporting a concave bracket from which depended two square foliated ornaments. The crowning element below the gilded plaster ceiling beams was a large bolster-like quarter-round molding painted red-orange except for the narrow vertical strips of scales that subdivided it into thirds, and its gilded acanthus corners. In the right angles between the upper four corbel elements, there were acanthus-based squinches with a tier of arcade motif and two tiers of large gilded plaster dentils.

The ceiling was composed of three large cove-lighted rectangular panels (with chamfered corners above the squinches) in the wide bays and much smaller rectangular panels in the two narrow bays. All were heavily framed by gilded plaster beams. The beams were bordered in the large bays by enriched moldings (large acanthus, narrow plain concave, small bead-and-reel, medium-sized acanthus, plain light cove, large waterleaf, and small waterleaf) rising successively to the light-blue-painted flat ceiling panels. The center of each of the three large ceiling panels contained a large crown-like foliated gilded pendant boss with a splayed foliate center from which was suspended by a long velvet-covered chain or rod one of the three grand lobby chandeliers, which did not hang in a straight line, as the lobby was slightly curved in plan. The chandeliers were fifteen feet high and executed in an Art Deco design of frosted glass and brass. There were brass ornaments composed of comic masks with floral crowns silhouetted against each glass face of the hexagonal fixtures.

The ceiling panels in the narrow bays were flanked by gilded beams running between the projecting corbels. Their outer edges were acanthus moldings, and there were light-blue-painted rectangular panels bordered by gilt waterleaf moldings in their soffits. The beam panels had chamfered corners, which gave them the appearance of having pointed ends. They were ornamented by gilded bas-relief paterae

with fleuron ends. The rectangular ceiling panels between the beams were divided into three parts and almost entirely gilded. The end portions were between the projecting corbels and contained extremely elaborate scrolled and foliated Baroque grilles. Each larger central portion was framed in small waterleaf molding and contained a small ungilded circular domical grille with a central gilded patera. The circular grilles were surrounded by bas-relief gilt scrollwork.

The mezzanine passage was not recorded in detail. Above a low dark marble base, the plaster walls of the lower balcony level passage were painted a grayish shade of blue-green with cream trim. The trim was composed of a dado with rectangular panels formed of simple moldings, a chair rail ornamented with an acroterion motif, and attenuated Corinthian pilasters in the Adamesque manner. Behind the grand lobby pilasters, the passage walls were trimmed with wide flat slabs of Sienna marble framing unmolded rectangular plaster panels. The plaster ceiling was composed of large shallow rectangular panels and smaller panels between pairs of beams above the Sienna marble trim. The panels had gilded cyma recta acanthus cornices. Above the ornamental gilded bronze railings at the openings into the grand lobby, the passage sides of the compound arches had a band of foliated and voluted gilded plaster trim "supporting" the truncated shafts of paneled Corinthian pilasters, between which were sections of cut garnet velvet (or heavily flocked paper) on a gold ground. The lighting fixtures were frosted glass and brass, those on the walls being in the form of simple upended scoops. Those at the ceiling were composed of a pair of shallow glass cones, the larger above the smaller, like inverted "Chinese hats" with a brass tassel hanging down.

The tonality of the auditorium was golden, set off by red upholstery and draperies. The elaborate stage box motifs of the walls flanking the enframing of the proscenium will be described later. Underneath the balcony, the orchestra walls were faced with Sienna marble above a low verde antique marble base as far back as the mezzanine parapet. Underneath the mezzanine, the Sienna marble was omitted from the upper part of the side walls and formed a dado. Above the dado, the walls were ornamented with bas-relief panels and spirally banded Corinthianesque colonnettes that were apparently made of molded plaster. The windows and doors in the rear wall of the orchestra

were flanked by similar but longer colonnettes whose capitals merged into narrow foliated friezes above slabs of Sienna marble. Three small Art Deco metal-supported frosted glass lighting fixtures were fastened to each side wall below the mezzanine, and others of the same design were centered on the marble portions of the rear wall.

The side walls of the mezzanine were not recorded in detail. The ornamentation of the rear wall was like that of the orchestra wall below it. The heavily gilded mezzanine parapet, which swelled out at each side of a long slightly concave central section in a convex "box" and a sweeping ogee before joining the side wall in a moderately convex run, was capped by a low stanchion-supported brass railing that was removed before HABS photographs were taken. The parapet was ornamented by a wide bas-relief frieze of vertical acanthus leaves between very small rope moldings. The parapet base had an enriched fillet and a run of waterleaf molding. The mezzanine soffit was bordered by a wide band of what appears to have been bas-relief acanthus and anthemion ornament and was inset with flat circular and square lights framed in narrow filigreed metalwork projecting slightly below the ceiling surface.

The plaster soffit of the balcony overhung the mezzanine completely and was painted a golden brown with all its bas-relief ornament covered with burnished gilding. The forward edge was bordered by a band of reel, acanthus, and ribbon moldings behind which were about six flat countersunk circular lights framed in Baroque plaster. A line of dentelle ornament ran across the ceiling to mark the main field, which contained three large cove-lighted irregularly-shaped red-lipped lacunars framed in Rococo plaster. There were several irregularly-shaped lobed ventilating grilles that projected slightly below the ceiling plane and were ornamented with complex curvilinear patterns. Rococo bas-relief scrolls spread across much of the ceiling surface.

The heavily gilded balcony parapet was ornamented with a series of closely-spaced splayed rectangular boxes, many of which contained spotlights. Their soffits continued the plane of the balcony soffit and were ornamented with very highly stylized rows of plume-like and interlaced foliation. Wider and narrower boxes alternated, their faces bearing either five or three slightly oval paterae,

between which were bow-knotted "drapery" pendants connected by swags beneath the paterae. The lower corners of the boxes had projecting volutes supporting thick foliated swags containing small shells. The upper corners had projecting spread-winged eagles. Wherever paterae had been removed to accommodate spotlights, the openings resembled oeils-de-boeuf. The parapet behind the light boxes was topped by a low brass railing.

The balcony cross aisles and vomitoria had brass-capped iron or bronze railings. Openwork panels containing vertical open-mouthed curling-tailed fish in foliate fronds alternated with ornamental stanchions whose upper and lower ends may have been suggested by tridents. The fish motif was repeated in a horizontal version on the brass-capped low railings atop the parapets fronting the middle and upper seating areas of the balcony.

There was no clear line of demarcation, such as a cornice, between the walls and ceiling, which simply merged in a continuous curve, except at the rear of the balcony, where a deep cove was bordered by a wide band of foliated molding "supported" at each end by a backward-leaning bas-relief spirally banded Ionic colonnette. The cove extended the depth of the last eight rows of balcony seats. Above a ramped Sienna marble dado, the sides were ornamented with a scattering of sprawling gilded Rococo bas-relief plasterwork. The major feature of the rear wall was a set of five indirectly-lighted lunette-shaped lacunars separated by wide spandrels of gilded Baroque plaster with touches of blue at their lips. All except the central lacunar over the projection room were set above a dado ornamented only by a bit of foliation below the spandrels and by bas-relief spiral colonnettes "supporting" long runs of Vitruvian scroll. Above the dado, the segmental-arch-headed wide lower lips of the lacunars were ornamented with a strigil motif flanking a central patera. All five lacunars were headed by Baroque plasterwork whose volute-flanked "keystones" and radiating elements gave the effect of very stylized shells.

The projection room extended forward for the depth of three rows of seats and spanned the width below the central lacunar and its flanking spandrels. Above a plain dado, its gilded plaster front had a narrow Art Deco wave motif running its full width. Above that motif, the central third of the front was ornamented by a very large shell motif whose convoluted Baroque upper edge formed the

lower lip of the lacunar. The shell motif bore a Baroque cartouche headed by a woman's face and was pierced by six small square ports. At each side of the shell motif, there were two large square shell-headed ports flanked by bas-relief spiral colonnettes. The projection room corners had Renaissance paneled pilasters "supporting" entablatures with C-scroll cresting that flanked the central shell motif.

The side walls of the auditorium were mirror images of each other. Therefore, the description of one suffices for both. Unless noted as "protruding," the ornament was executed in gilded bas-relief plaster. Between the cove at the rear and the front of the balcony, the principal decorative feature was a large indirectly-lighted shallow niche which, together with the elements flanking it, faced the middle section of seats. Between the rear cove and the upper cross-aisle exit, there was a winged putto, or genius, under a C-scroll and, on the downward side, a short Corinthianesque pilaster "supporting" an eared urn out of which rose tall stylized foliation. Above the exit there was an indirectly-lighted niche framed by a shouldered quatrefoil mantled in strapwork and "supporting" a flared stand on which there perched a short-necked bird unknown to ornithology. Its wings were outspread. The quatrefoil contained a foliated fleur-de-lys-shaped grille with seeded ends.

At the same height, there was an identical illuminated quatrefoil niche above the lower cross-aisle exit. However, as that aisle was much lower, an overdoor ornament and a tall panel were inserted between the top of the exit and the niche. The overdoor ornament was composed of a compound palmette flanked by very stylized addorsed gryphons. The panel above it contained a Baroque escutcheon bearing a lidded urn. There was a tall Corinthianesque pilaster on the downward side of the exit. It "supported" an urn like that atop the short pilaster beside the putto already mentioned on the upward side of the upper cross-aisle exit. Both urns were at the same height, and both pilaster shafts were ornamented with three parallel vertical rows of reel molding.

The elements flanking the principal niche were set above the ramped Sienna marble dado between the upper and lower exits. Nearest the exits, there were pilasters with interlace-patterned panels edged with rope molding. Their unorthodox Renaissance Corinthian capitals had protruding



central volutes and carried "entablature blocks" composed of S-scroll-flanked shells below two tiers of acanthus capped by denticulated abaci. The abaci "supported" large inward-curving segments of molding like the too-widely-separated halves of a broken pediment. The moldings approximated quarter circles in outline and were ornamented with waterleaf and acanthus. They were visually upheld by Greek-key braces. Between the pilasters and the enframing of the niche, there were slightly concave Renaissance arabesque panels in Baroque-headed frames composed of cornucopia-motif bases, slender pilasters, and elaborate tops combining acanthus, volutes, and large protruding foliated boss-like elements concealing lights. Birds of indeterminate species spread their wings above the frames. Between the panels and the frame of the niche, there were very elongated Corinthianesque spiral colonnettes topped by small lidded urns. The colonnettes were "supported" by banderol moldings that ran along the top of the ramped marble dado and then turned upward.

The framing elements of the niche projected quite boldly in comparison with the bas-relief ornamentation described so far. Below the relatively shallow lighted opening, a compound semi-circular corbel with a flat soffit sprouted vine-like foliation from its base and supported a foliated boss-like form with an ogee profile. A pair of large volutes flanked the "boss." Above the foliated semi-circular top of the "boss," there was an acanthus crown from which sprouted a burst of voluted foliation atop which perched a very large long-necked bird with wings outspread, perhaps meant to represent a phoenix. The niche behind the bird and its pedestal was framed by a kind of baldachin motif.

At each side of the niche, the engaged columnar motif was composed of a tiered sheaf of spirally bound acanthus that was supported on an elaborate corbel and widened slightly as it rose to terminate in a single upward-and-outward-sloping volute instead of a capital. The binding "ribbons" were ornamented with alternating paterae and fleurs-de-lys, and the engaged shafts they bound were semielliptical in plan. A cornucopia rose precariously toward the center from the lower slope of each "volute-capital" to support the forward-thrusting half of an embossed voluted broken pediment motif that abutted a very large square central pendant. Above the pendant, an elaborate keystone supported yet another stylized bird. An enriched spandrel course crowned by a Vitruvian-scroll frieze and a bolster cornice that arched upward to a

voluted and vine-sprouting climax above the bird completed the gilded panoply of this pseudo-Baroque fantasy. Enriched inverted C-scrolls connected the crowning elements of the niche frame to the "entablature blocks" of the pilasters beyond the arabesque panels, and Rococo foliation sprawled loosely across the wall between the cove at the rear of the balcony and the top of the niche frame. Within the niche, there were gold-fringed red-orange velvet draperies.

Between the lower cross-aisle exit and the front of the balcony, there was a round-arch-headed bas-relief panel of illusionistic perspective. It represented a space with an Ionic columnar arcade at each side supporting a reticulated barrel vault. A lidded urn on a square plinth occupied the center. The base of the panel rested on a cornucopia above the ramped Sienna marble dado. Above the panel, bas-relief scrollwork resembling a Baroque console in outline flanked the pilaster beside the exit. The motif was feebly supported visually by a thin frond of foliation resting on fleur-de-lys-headed shafts rising from the shoulders of the arch-headed panel.

Between the balcony parapet line and the proscenium, the side walls rose uninterrupted until they blended with the ceiling. The lower level was faced with sienna marble slabs above a verde antique marble base. In each wall section flanking the set of two paired exit doors, there was a relatively small segmental-arch-headed niche containing a lidded urn of pierced plasterwork illuminated from within. The major decorative feature of each side wall was an upward-soaring baldachin motif framing a fountain in a "box." A pair of boldly projecting engaged columns supported the quarter arcs that thrust forward to form the canopy. Each column rested on a corbel-supported plinth whose single panel was framed by waterleaf molding. The columns had alternating spiral bands of fleurs-de-lys and Vitruvian scrolls above two bands of acanthus and had variant Corinthian capitals. They supported lidded urns flanking the shoulders of the quarter arcs whose volutes clasped a square foliated pendant. The soffits of the arcs were cusped. Above the pendant, in front of a large irregularly-shaped reticulated organ grille, the arcs supported a large circular cushion-like element of pierced scrollwork. Above a ring of fleurs-de-lys, the "cushion" upheld a tall open crown. Within the canopy formed by the voluted arcs, there were three swags of gold-fringed red-orange velvet drapery, and below the swags a pair of gilded plaster S-shaped foliated scrolls with voluted ends formed an inner archway. Below that archway, a tier of open brackets ornamented each side of the drapery-hung opening.

Below the opening, a very large gilded foliated corbel that sprang from the zone just above the exit doors (where there was an Art Deco frieze) supported the boldly projecting box motif that contained the basin of the fountain in front of the opening. The "box" was semicircular in plan and had a high concave parapet with a foliated base and three large scrolled and foliated vertical ornaments. The rim had bead-and-reel molding above small acanthus lappets. Large compound scrolls bearing urn-shaped foliated finials flanked the "box." The fountain itself was made of gilded metal and rose from the center of its circular basin. It had a tall standard composed of a plain circular base, egg-and-dart molding, a short slotted tier, rope molding, a tall concave outward-flaring slotted tier, a transitional concave slotted collar edged with a pendant arcuated motif, a still taller outward-flaring slotted tier, and a low concave slotted tier supporting a waterleaf-foliated domed top bearing the statue of a boy astride a dolphin. Elaborately scrolled foliated flanges resembling Greek anthemion vines projected from the sides of the standard. The water trickled from the underside of the domed top.

Flanking each of the baldachin columns, there was a cluster of three colonnettes on a console-supported single-paneled plinth ornamented with a patera. Each engaged cluster projected boldly and was composed of two extremely elongated colonnettes spiralling in opposite directions and fronted by an equally elongated foliated colonnette with a variant Ionic capital. Each of the two clusters supported a lidded urn.

Beyond the clusters of colonnettes, the entire baldachin motif was framed by a pair of bas-relief pilasters supporting bas-relief gryphons and double compound arches of Rococo scrolls. The pilasters, one beside the balcony line and the other beside the proscenium, were each "supported" on a flat scrolled console and contained a tall rectangular enriched panel. Above a narrow capital, each pilaster "supported" a gryphon in profile resting on its tightly coiled tail and facing away from its fellow. Above the gryphons' heads, inward-facing quarter-circular arc segments "supported" two tiers of voluted Rococo scrolls, the lower tier arching to a shell "keystone," and the upper joining at yet another bird with wings outspread.

At each side of the stage, an enormously tall and slender engaged colonnette marked the point where the side wall blended into the proscenium. Beyond the colonnette, a narrow concave wall section effected the transition to

the proscenium frame itself. Above a verde antique marble base, the colonnette and concavity faced the outward-curving orchestra pit and stage apron. (The pit railing repeated the pattern of the balcony cross-aisle railings.) The colonnette was composed of a faceted and foliated three-tiered base, a long spiral shaft, and a greatly elongated three-tiered foliated and voluted capital supporting a faceted urn with a tall finial-lid. The concave wall section was ornamented with a bas-relief Renaissance candelabrum motif above the body and wing of a very stylized gryphon composed largely of volutes. The volute symbolizing the gryphon's forequarters, and its head, turned at a 45° angle to form the base of the columnar motif flanking the proscenium opening. Within the opening, the reveal was composed of a single tall enriched panel above a low verde antique base.

Above the gryphon motif, the proscenium frame was composed of superposed blocky courses, including bands of foliation, forming an angular "column." The proscenium arch was composed of wing-like corbels that were cantilevered from the sides of the "columns" and "supported" a central cusped arch. The corbels were so elongated that they looked precarious. They were ornamented with stylized gryphons at their springing, and each was crowned by a row of acanthus cresting. The central cusped arch had an elaborately ornamented surface and an extrados bearing a relatively small shell at its apex and foliated scrolls above paterae. The arch was flanked by cornucopiae supporting still another pair of gryphons.

Flanking the cornucopiae and gryphons, there were triangular spaces above the elongated corbels. Those spaces were ornamented by bas-relief arcades supported on large square piers carrying lidded urns, the whole rendered in illusionistic perspective diminishing toward the center. The gryphons' upswept wings merged with foliated volutes supporting bas-relief lidded urns, the whole framing the sides of a large irregularly-shaped central lacunar. The indirectly-lighted shallow lacunar contained a mural painting depicting three female figures flanked by a pair of peacocks with drooping tails, apparently in a garden setting. The figures wore filmy draperies cut like evening dresses of the 1920s. The young woman on the left played cymbals, the one in the center played a long-necked lute-like instrument, and the figure at the right held a lute. Above the lacunar, a heavy slotted organ grille was set in a Baroque plaster frame with a scrolled foliated soffit. The frame formed a segmental arch with an elaborate

central cartouche-like pierced ornament and had at each end a motif that was possibly intended to represent a very stylized ship's prow and forecastle.

. . . the original Grand Drapery with golden fringe still hung in its dusty red furbelows from the proscenium in its final days. Sadly, though, the wildly embroidered house curtain of opening night had disappeared, replaced by a plain flaming red velvet traveller. (Paterson)

The original gold and henna (red-orange) house curtain was embroidered in a pattern of vine and flower garlands and peacocks with drooping tails. It is reported that 30,000 bicycle reflectors were used in the embroidery. (Helgesen)

As previously noted, the ceiling merged into the walls without any clear line of demarcation. Near each of the rear "corners" in front of the cove at the back of the balcony, there was a comparatively small irregularly shaped cove-lighted lacunar of generally triangular form. Two concentric rings of ornament framed the principal feature of the ceiling, the immense cove-lighted dome that was about 100 feet in diameter. The outer ring was composed of a bas-relief band of enriched Vitruvian scrolls interrupted at intervals by sprawling Rococo foliation and, over the rear center of the balcony, by a more tightly organized Baroque panel. The heavily gilded and boldly modeled inner ring formed the lip of the lighting cove framing the dome. It was composed of a series of five enriched concentric moldings of varying widths, the widest having an ogee profile. Eight Baroque cartouches were applied at intervals to the frame of the dome. The four on the principal axes were slightly larger and somewhat more elaborate than the others. Within the dome, a gilded inner ring ornamented with concentric bas-relief rows of waterleaf molding protruded downward to form another lighting cove surrounding a very large central pendant boss. The boss, ornamented with very stylized gilded rows of concentric foliation, descended to merge with a three-tiered circular cut glass Art Deco chandelier that continued the form of the pendant boss.

Attempts to define the style of the Fox Theatre interiors have varied widely. For example:

The luxurious interiors of the new Fox are perhaps what the dilettante would call of the Baroque /sic!/? School, somewhat Spanish in period. The scheme, as C. Howard Crane, the architect, puts it, is really a fusion of the modern and the ancient making for a symphony of refinement in color and arrangement. (Brooklyn Eagle, August 31, 1928)

Notwithstanding the "symphony of refinement," the arrangement had no really consistent unifying theme. The staff in Crane's office who were responsible for the highly eclectic design of the grand lobby and auditorium were apparently striving for novelty above all else. Unlike true Baroque design, there was a lack of structural logic that was visually disconcerting, particularly so in the large balcony wall niches and in the proscenium arch. The disjointed, episodic composition of the auditorium walls only gained what little unity it possessed through the lavish application of burnished gilding.

. . . the designers of the Fox planned the large edifice to represent an undersea palace. The inside shell of the dome and the mural decorations carry out the theme as does the combination of green and tan marble in the lobby. (Brooklyn Eagle, June 8, 1948)

The frequent occurrence of marine or aquatic motifs, Vitruvian scrolls (representing waves), shells, water plants, dolphins and other fish, seems to validate the undersea palace theory, but the theory fails to account for many other motifs, among them, acanthus, birds, gryphons, and the frequent use of red-orange. It is possible, even probable, that no general theme was intended. Certainly the evidence suggests that none was, in fact, carried out.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The heating system was not recorded. The theatre, stage service building, and office building had a central heating system, probably using a single source for all three structures. The theatre had an efficient air conditioning and ventilating system, described as follows:

An entire sub-basement in the Fox Theater houses one of the most efficient refrigerating plants yet devised for theater operation. An enormous fan draws 80,000 cubic feet of air per minute through vents in the roof and conveys it through huge ducts to the basement. Here it enters the washing room where innumerable jets of cold water are played upon it to remove all dust and foreign matter. Emerging from the washer, the air passes through a steam-heated dryer into the refrigerating room. Circulating through a series of ammonia-filled pipes which chill it to the proper temperature, there results a cool, clean comfortable atmosphere that is pumped into the theater through openings close to the floor. As the air becomes heated, it slowly rises and is drawn off, to be supplanted with a new supply. (Brooklyn Eagle, June 2, 1929)

- b. Lighting: The lighting of the public areas of the theatre has been described en passant as an integral part of the decoration. The stage and house lights were controlled from a large switchboard at stage right (the northeast side) and a smaller portable switchboard crated below the scene doors in the southwest wall. Various colors could be thrown on the cyclorama at the rear of the stage from a double row of spotlights in a stage-floor trough.

There was a spotlight bridge up in each of the stage wings and these, along with five hanging borders, a double row of footlights, a row of balcony spots with motorized gels, another row of spots in the great dome, /and/ twin carbon-arc spots in the projection room . . . served to light up the . . . stage. (Paterson)

- c. Stage and projection equipment: There were Peter Clark lifts for the orchestra, the main console of the organ, and a portion of the stage floor. The latter could rise from the basement on its four worm-gear posts to a height of only about four feet above the stage level. "There were row upon row of battens and teasers up in the flies." The screen was a Magnascope picture sheet measuring 24 by 46 feet. The projector throw was 178 feet. There were a Brenograph projector and, curiously, three Cinemascope projectors in the projection room until shortly before demolition began. An RCA television projector had been mounted at the center of the balcony parapet. (Paterson)

- d. Organ: The Wurlitzer organ was number 1904, a four-manual instrument in the firm's "Crawford Special" series. It was shipped from the factory in North Tonawanda, New York, on July the 5th, 1928, and was the largest theatre organ built until the Radio City Music Hall organ was installed four years later. The main console and smaller slave console were originally covered with gold leaf but not, like others in the series, sculptured. Not long after it was installed, the main console was redecorated in cream-white, with flowers painted on its sides and piping pans in foliate scrolls on the horseshoe above the manuals. Its scalloped edges and acanthus brackets were gilded. The console was at the northeast (Flatbush Avenue) side of the orchestra pit on its own lift.

The four-manual main console had 312 stops, 23 couplers, and 13 tremulants among other controls connected to 37 ranks of pipes. Special effects included xylophones, two chrysoglotts, a glockenspiel, tuned sleighbells, cathedral chimes, large-scale tower chimes, a fight gong, a wind/surf whistle, and a locomotive whistle, among others. There were seven organ chambers.

The main and string chambers on the left /northeast, or Flatbush Avenue side/ and the two foundation chambers on the right /southwest, or Livingston Street side/ were built to speak through high draped openings /the stage box, or fountain niche motifs/ into the theatre. Their triangular shape was acoustically more reverberant than the standard box /but/ . . . the shutters were at the narrow end and . . . since there were no tone chutes . . . the music /was/ . . . absorbed by the tremendous air shaft, by the raw plaster of the false walls and by the ponderous drapes themselves.

The /three/ proscenium chambers . . . sitting side by side above the stage . . . spoke through meagre shutter openings directly into the gridiron between the false ceiling and the roof. The opening into the auditorium was a heavy plaster cove grille lying horizontally in the ceiling about fifteen feet in front of and eight feet below the middle (orchestra) chamber /which was flanked by the solo and percussion chambers/. Again with no tone chutes to direct the sound downward most of it got lost before it came anywhere near the grille . . . .  
(Paterson)



Geoffrey Paterson colorfully described the inconvenient, difficult, and actually dangerous access routes to the various organ chambers via ladders, trapdoors, and perilous catwalks. Portions of the organ had been ruined by water damage, but parts were saved before demolition by a group of theatre organ enthusiasts and stored in Philadelphia for possible reuse. As previously noted, the acoustics of the mezzanine were poor, and the placement of square boxes containing loud speakers around the auditorium without any attempt to integrate them into the decorative scheme suggests that the acoustics throughout the house left much to be desired.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The tripartite building complex composed of office building, theatre, and stage service building occupied a truncated triangular site facing northeast approximately 263 feet on Flatbush Avenue, 212 feet west by northwest along Nevins Street, and southwest 181 feet on Livingston Street. The site was in the heart of the theatre district of the downtown commercial area of Brooklyn. Loew's Metropolitan Theatre, the Brooklyn Paramount, and the RKO Albee Theatre were all in the vicinity, near the junction of Fulton Street with Flatbush Avenue. The Nevins Street subway station of the Interborough Rapid Transit system was on Flatbush Avenue, directly in front of the Fox Theatre.

Prepared by A. Craig Morrison  
Architect,  
National Park Service  
1971

Lucy Pope Wheeler  
HABS Writer/Editor  
1976

and Denys Peter Myers  
HABS Architectural Historian  
1980

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a Historic American Buildings Survey project to record selected representative examples of theatre design in the United States during the first third of the 20th century. Begun under the general supervision of James C. Massey, it was subsequently continued under Dr. John Poppeliers, succeeding Chief of the Survey. Photographic records of the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn were made before demolition started in 1970 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer. Color slides were lent for study and copying by A. Craig Morrison, former HABS Architect who was then Archivist of the Theatre Historical Society, and by Brother Andrew Corsini, Editor of Marquee, the Journal of the Theatre Historical Society, who supplied additional data. Mr. Morrison also supplied a draft partial description of the Fox Theatre that served as a basis for additional study. HABS Writer/Editor Lucy Pope Wheeler carried on extensive historical research and greatly augmented the originally available data, compiling and writing a narrative and interpretive manuscript. Final research and the resulting descriptive version of the historical and architectural data was the work of HABS Architectural Historian Denys Peter Myers.